

Director of Central Intelligence

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Special National Intelligence Estimate

# Angola: Near-Term Prospects

## Key Judgments

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**ANGOLA:  
NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS**

**KEY JUDGMENTS**

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

*Also Participating:*

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

*The Angolan Government will continue to lose ground to the UNITA insurgents over the next year, particularly in the rural areas, although we do not expect dramatic net changes in the overall military situation. UNITA—which has 35,000 men under arms and conducts sustained guerrilla activities in 12 of Angola's 16 provinces—will continue to make advances, particularly in the northeast where the economically important diamond mines and coffee plantations are located, but UNITA will remain unable to defeat the Angolan and Cuban forces that hold the major cities and key garrisons. (Luanda has a 35,000-man Army and 65,000-man People's Militia, and Havana's military contingent numbers about 30,000, of which an estimated 23,000 are combat troops.)*

*Spreading insurgent activity will cause Soviet and Cuban backers to increase their already high level of support to the besieged regime. Cuban forces may be further augmented, and they are likely to become more actively involved in the fighting. The Soviets, who have warned the South Africans they will give Luanda all the support necessary to protect Angola's territorial integrity, will increase their commitment to the MPLA regime by sending more arms, supporting a more active Cuban role, and even increasing their advisory presence as conditions dictate. We believe that the Soviets have not yet decided how far they will go to preserve the MPLA regime. While we think Moscow will stop short of sending its own ground combat troops to Angola during the next year, there is a growing possibility it will send pilots, air defense crews, and additional advisers. The chances of intervention would increase if, in the long run, Cuban forces are unable to stabilize the military situation.*

*Despite the probable increase in Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Angolan conflict, we do not expect the insurgents to suffer major reverses. The additional Communist assistance, however, will probably slow the UNITA offensive and will improve the MPLA's capability to hold on to major urban centers.*

Moscow's growing military commitment to Angola reflects Luanda's importance to broader Soviet objectives: namely, undermining

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Western influence throughout the Third World, competing with the Chinese, promoting pro-Soviet change, and obtaining greater air and naval access in the region. Angola serves Soviet objectives in southern Africa by affording the USSR entree to the SWAPO and ANC insurgent groups, which supports Moscow's long-term objective of undermining the white minority regime in South Africa.

In our view, Moscow could maintain its current level of support, and even increase it significantly, without feeling pressured to reexamine its position in Angola. Havana, in addition to being ideologically committed to the MPLA regime, will follow Soviet preferences as long as the costs of its involvement in Angola do not rise precipitously, such as by a sharp rise in casualties.

*Angola faces an acute financial crisis as burgeoning investment costs in the petroleum and diamond sectors and a heavy debt service obligation for foreign military supplies and technicians consume almost all of the country's hard currency earnings.* Overall, GDP probably will drop at least another 5 to 10 percent over the next year as a result of Luanda's inability to increase imports of essential goods and the steady drop in economic activities as UNITA sabotage teams move farther north. Luanda's efforts to obtain financial relief, particularly from Western sources, are not likely to be very successful. The continuing economic decline in Angola probably will prompt Luanda to ask Moscow for further concessions in their bilateral economic relationship—such as delaying repayments for military assistance—which the Soviets are likely to grant.

*The political balance within the MPLA will remain delicate over the next year. Ideological factionalism and related racial tensions between mulattoes and blacks are major sources of friction within the regime that will continue to impede significant decisionmaking.* The military successes of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA over the past year, however, appear to have narrowed differences between principal MPLA factions—the mulatto-led, pro-Soviet, more ideological hardliners and the more moderate, pragmatic black nationalists—on the necessity for an increased military effort against Savimbi's insurgents.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, prefers the term "Lara faction" to "hardliners" and accepts the use of the term "hardliners" in the context of this paper only as indicating that this group in the Angolan Government has consistently advocated close ties with the Soviet Union and its Communist allies, that many within it appear committed to Marxist-Leninist ideology, and that the group as a whole opposes any form of political accommodation with UNITA. State/INR believes that, regardless of these labels, there are few in the government who would take exception to Angola's "hardline" position against South Africa and UNITA.

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Although President dos Santos has reduced somewhat the power of the hardliners in the MPLA over the past two years—while undercutting the black nationalists even more—we still believe that no major decision can be made without the hardliners' agreement. Moreover, we believe that dos Santos cannot overly antagonize the hardliners even on lesser matters without running the risk of a move against him by this faction, particularly since we believe that the hardliners retain strong influence in the military and intelligence services.

UNITA's strategy is to force the MPLA into a negotiated settlement. UNITA's leaders apparently recognize that they cannot militarily defeat the MPLA regime as long as the Cubans and Soviets remain in Angola. However, *by crippling the Angolan economy and raising the cost of the conflict to unacceptable levels, the UNITA leadership believes it ultimately can force the MPLA to a negotiated settlement.*

The South Africans, for their part, probably are satisfied with the results over the past year of their policy toward Angola. At a minimum, Pretoria probably calculates that the inability of Luanda to part with Cuban troops has eased pressure on South Africa to agree to a Namibian settlement. Furthermore, South Africa also probably believes that time is on the side of the UNITA insurgents, despite increased Soviet and Cuban assistance. *Consequently, we expect South Africa to continue its current policy directions, to talk about negotiating with Luanda while keeping up the military pressure on the MPLA regime, with the long-term intention of driving its Soviet and Cuban backers out of Angola.*

Some South African policymakers, including senior military officers, wish to pursue an international settlement on Namibia that provides for a Cuban withdrawal from Angola. Some individuals may believe that UNITA can win a military victory over the MPLA. Pretoria would prefer a solution that included a Cuban removal, an MPLA-UNITA reconciliation, and the establishment of a non-SWAPO-dominated government in Namibia, but most of the leadership realizes that it is unlikely to attain all these goals.

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